

# VIRGINIA OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

## A SYSTEM SAVING LIVES



*“To those who protect us, our guardsmen, law enforcement officers, firefighters and EMTs: I pledge an administration that will work to ensure you have the resources and the support you need to keep our families and neighborhoods safe. The work you do is dangerous and essential. And we salute your dedication.”*

—Excerpt from Governor Timothy M. Kaine’s  
Inaugural Address, January 14, 2006,  
Colonial Capitol, Williamsburg, Va.



## Office of EMS Mission Statement

To reduce death and disability resulting from sudden or serious injury and illness in the Commonwealth through planning and development of a comprehensive, coordinated statewide emergency medical services (EMS) system; and provision of other technical assistance and support to enable the EMS community to provide the highest quality emergency medical care possible to those in need.



Photo: Chesterfield Fire and EMS & Forest View Volunteer Rescue Squad

## Who We Are

The Office of EMS, Virginia Department of Health (VDH), oversees one of the largest statewide EMS systems in the country. There are approximately 716 licensed agencies, 3,691 permitted EMS vehicles and more than 33,450 EMS personnel in Virginia.

## What We Do

The Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) is the lead state agency responsible for planning and coordinating an effective and efficient statewide EMS system. OEMS is designated by the Code of Virginia to license EMS agencies, certify EMS personnel and inspect and permit EMS vehicles. Our programs and services are designed to improve patient care, from when the call for help is received by the 9-1-1 center to the delivery of the patient to a trauma center or hospital.

We work with Virginia's EMS providers, agencies and localities to provide:

- Training
- Funding
- Technical Support
- Patient Care Data
- Financial Resources
- Regional EMS Council Designation
- Trauma Center Designation
- Emergency Operations

Our commitment as a VDH office is to assure that quality pre-hospital patient care is available statewide.



Photo: Virginia Office of EMS, 2005 EMS Symposium

## Training

The level of patient care that EMS agencies provide continues to increase every year. We have approximately 8,000 advanced life support (ALS) providers and 25,000 basic life support (BLS) providers. In Virginia, volunteer and career (paid) personnel follow the same training requirements for all ALS and BLS certifications.

These providers are not just transporting injured or sick persons to medical facilities. They perform emergency care that includes administration of oxygen, fluids and medications. They open airways, control bleeding, defibrillate patients to restart their hearts and much more.

Through training and continuing education, the Office of EMS helps providers achieve and maintain a high level of patient care proficiency. Training is provided for all levels of emergency patient care – First Responder, EMT Basic, EMT Enhanced, EMT Intermediate and Paramedic. Every year, approximately 12,000 providers are certified and recertified.

We also train the instructors who teach these classes and conduct classes for Operational Medical Directors and emergency nurses.

EMS agencies are offered training on topics such as: how to manage their operations; revenue recovery through billing for services; recruiting and retaining EMS personnel; and conducting community injury prevention programs.

The Office of EMS hosts one of the largest EMS training events in the nation—the annual Virginia EMS Symposium. Approximately 1,800 providers, faculty and staff attend the Symposium to take advantage of close to 250 workshops.



## EMS Funding

Through the Office of EMS, Virginia's volunteer and municipal EMS agencies are eligible for a semi-annual grant program totaling close to \$7 million each year.



Photo: Richmond Times-Dispatch

Fire departments, rescue squads and other non-profit EMS agencies can apply for funding to purchase ambulances, defibrillators and other EMS equipment. Funding is available for ALS training, recruitment and retention as well as leadership and management programs. EMS agencies and local governments can also apply for emergency operations equipment and communications hardware. Neighboring

localities and EMS agencies are encouraged to work together and apply for projects that benefit multiple jurisdictions.

These grants and Office of EMS operations are funded by the annual four-dollar motor vehicle-registration fee commonly called "Four for Life." The fees are collected by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

EMS agencies can also take advantage of state contracts to purchase ambulances and other EMS equipment at a more economical price.

## Return to Localities

Every city and county in Virginia receives 26 percent of the "Four for Life" fees. These local funds are designated for training and EMS equipment and supplies. The amount returned to local governments is based on the number of vehicles registered in each locality.

## Regulation and Compliance

The Office of EMS program representatives, located across the state, provide technical assistance and support to help EMS agencies and local governments enhance the level of emergency medical care in their communities. The program representatives use their expertise to assist localities assess system needs and identify regional and



Photo: Virginia Office of EMS

OEMS resources to address areas that need improvement.

To help Virginia's EMS agencies comply with established regulations, we inspect and license every EMS agency at least once every two years. EMS vehicles are inspected to assure they are properly staffed and equipped.

In addition to investigating complaints regarding providers or EMS agencies, the program representatives oversee the administration of certification examinations.

## Critical Incident Stress Management

Emergency service and public health personnel deal with unique types of stress. The Office of EMS coordinates 16 Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams across Virginia.

Virginia's teams serve as a national model. We were the first in the country to have a statewide system of CISM programs. The CISM training helps team members learn

how to be active listeners and provide peer support to Virginia public safety personnel, after a critical incident.

## Regional EMS Councils

The Office of EMS contracts with 11 Regional EMS Councils to provide programs, services and coordination for local EMS agencies.

These councils, which are non-profit organizations, provide and/or organize EMS training; assist in the administration of certification examinations; review grant requests; serve as a clearinghouse for EMS information; and coordinate the writing of trauma triage plans and disaster management plans.

Most of the councils also coordinate regional medical direction including the designation of a regional medical director and the development and maintenance of regional EMS protocols, ambulance restocking agreements and medication kit exchange programs.

To find your closest regional EMS council, visit their Web site at [www.vaems.org](http://www.vaems.org)

- **Blue Ridge EMS Council, Lynchburg**
- **Central Shenandoah EMS Council, Staunton**
- **Lord Fairfax EMS Council, Winchester**
- **Northern Virginia EMS Council, Gainesville**
- **Old Dominion EMS Alliance, Richmond**
- **Peninsulas EMS Council, Gloucester**
- **Rappahannock EMS Council, Fredericksburg**
- **Southwest Virginia EMS Council, Abingdon**
- **Thomas Jefferson EMS Council, Charlottesville**
- **Tidewater EMS Council, Norfolk**
- **Western Virginia EMS Council, Roanoke**



Photo: Rappahannock EMS Council



Photo: Virginia Office of EMS; Franklin, Va. Flood of 1999

## Disaster and Emergency Operations

If there is a disaster or terrorist incident in your community, the Office of EMS can quickly be on site to assist in emergency medical response and recovery.

We have Health and Medical Emergency Response Teams throughout the state that will bring specialized emergency response members and equipment to your community.

These highly trained individuals and teams help coordinate health and medical resources; bring fully staffed and equipped ambulances; provide medical expertise; respond to critical incident stress management needs; and provide on-site massage therapy to tired emergency response workers. We even have dog therapy teams that help the responders relieve stress.

Virginia teams have also been deployed out-of-state to assist with rescue and recovery efforts for natural disasters such as hurricanes.

## Trauma Centers

We oversee the statewide designation of Level I, II and III trauma centers. These Virginia hospitals reduce preventable death by 25 percent. They are staffed and equipped to provide a high level of trauma care. Each trauma center meets strict criteria including facilities, on-site physicians and other medical professionals.

A Trauma Registry is administered by the Office of EMS for the collection and evaluation of patient care in Virginia's acute care hospitals.



Photo: Nightingale Regional Air Ambulance

The Office of EMS also administers a Trauma Center Fund to help trauma centers defray the costs of providing trauma care.



## 9-1-1 Center Emergency Medical Dispatch Accreditation

Local 9-1-1 Centers, also referred to as Public Safety Answering Points, can earn statewide accreditation from the Office of EMS. The accreditation recognizes localities that use emergency medical dispatch (EMD) protocols and other training and education.

There is no fee for this voluntary accreditation and grant funds may be available to assist jurisdictions establish, upgrade and maintain EMD systems.



Photo: Carilion Life-Guard

## Air Medical Evacuation

The Office of EMS coordinates a statewide air medical evacuation (Medevac) system that provides helicopter and fixed wing air medical services. These private and public Medevac agencies transport our most critically ill and injured patients to specialty care and trauma centers.



Photo: Virginia Office of EMS

## EMS For Children

The Office of EMS recognizes that children have special needs as patients in the EMS system. Virginia's EMS for Children program ensures that quality emergency medical care is available for children and adolescents, and that pediatric education and services are integrated into the EMS system.

## Poison Control Centers

We administer the Virginia Poison Control Network. These three Poison Control Centers provide poison information and consultative services to all Virginians. They decrease morbidity, mortality and health care costs by reducing outpatient visits and hospital admissions, and improve the quality of care provided to patients with accidental or self-poisoning.



## EMS Advisory Board

All of our programs and services are created with close coordination and guidance from the State EMS Advisory Board. These 28 members are appointed by the Governor and are experts in their field of pre-hospital emergency medical care. They represent key stakeholder organizations involved in Virginia's EMS System.

The Board and its 17 standing committees advise our office and the State Board of Health on the planning and administration of programs designed to enhance and improve Virginia's EMS System.

## Governor's Outstanding EMS Awards

The men and women who dedicate their lives to saving lives and reducing suffering deserve our thanks and recognition.

Each year, the State EMS Advisory Board and the Office of EMS oversee the selection of the Governor's Outstanding EMS Awards winners.

Each Regional EMS Council submits its regional winners for statewide consideration. The state winners are recognized at the annual EMS Symposium with a special award and certificate from the Governor.

## Partners in Virginia's EMS System

The State EMS Advisory Board provides critical knowledge, guidance and services to the Office of EMS to help make this one of the most comprehensive systems in the country. The board is comprised of representatives of the organizations listed below. The Office of EMS also partners with other state agencies and organizations to coordinate, plan and implement programs and services. Visit our Web site for a full list of partners.

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Emergency Physicians  
American College of Surgeons  
Association of Public Safety Communications Officials  
Medical Society of Virginia  
Virginia Ambulance Association  
Virginia Association of Counties  
Virginia Association of Governmental EMS Administrators  
Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads  
Virginia Emergency Nurses Association  
Virginia Fire Chief's Association  
Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association  
Virginia Municipal League  
Virginia Nurses Association  
Virginia Professional Firefighters  
Virginia State Firefighters Association  
Virginia's Regional EMS Councils

## Stay In Touch with the Office of EMS

The Office of EMS continues to expand and change to meet the needs of Virginia's EMS agencies and citizens. Keep up with the latest programs and services through our Web site at [www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems). While visiting the Web site, subscribe to our e-mail service for important updates.

If you are a local government official, EMS leader or a concerned citizen and you have a question, call our toll-free number (1-800-523-6019) or send us an e-mail at [emstechasst@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:emstechasst@vdh.virginia.gov).

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